

3/2/2022

## Testimony Regarding An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record

Dear Co-Chair Senator Robyn Porter, Co-Chair Senator Julie Kushner, and Esteemed Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

I am writing to ask you to support legislation that would put into law the proposed actions in the bill before the Labor and Public Employees Committee known as **An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record**. I would like to give my testimony on the collateral damage that I have gone through in the years since my release that has hindered my progress and integration back into the community.

I was released into a halfway house in 2015. I was eager to start my life and get my daughter back into my custody. I remember filling out application after application on a daily basis on the internet and at job fairs. It was a time where everyone was hiring but yet I received no calls. I even would call back jobs to no prevail. I was given a felony friendly employment list and applied to what I could on that list. I got lucky with an interview at Target. I remember nailing the interview and was invited to orientation. On my first day, my orientation, they notified me that they received my background check and I no longer fit the criteria of what they needed. After so long and thinking I finally made a breakthrough, I was still stuck because of my background which I had already paid for.

In order to gain custody back of my daughter, I had to obtain my own apartment. Applying for apartments was one in the same as applying for employment. I filled out as many applications in Hartford county as I could. I paid over \$500 in application fees. In the end I was turned down by all of them because of my criminal record. I even went back to a place I lived before my incarceration to see if I could get back in there. I had moved out with great standing. From the time I left till when I came to them to get back in, management had changed but the building manager and maintenance still remained. I was even denied from them. I tried to appeal it, even the building manager and maintenance gave me great reviews in hopes management would let me back in. However, I was still denied. I was starting to lose hope at regaining my life back but I continued to search. There was one apartment complex who finally accepted me however, the acceptance didn't come easy. I was denied but, the fear of running out of time to regain custody of my child made me desperate enough that this time I wasn't taking no for an answer. I appealed their decision, got reference letters, and called them often. Finally, they were willing to rent to me with an apartment of their choice. Knowing this was my only way in, I accepted. They put me near their office to keep an eye on me however, it was in a very rough spot. To be exact, it was the same environment that led me down the wrong path to begin with. Once again being punished for things I already served my time for.

It's been 7 years since that I have been out of jail and out of trouble and yet I still remain held back and punished for something I paid my dues for. I still have a hard time finding jobs and I am even denied certain programs for help. When I received my sentence, that wasn't my only punishment. I lost many things including custody of my child. My child was even punished as she had to remain within the state services until I was able to find stable housing. While in jail I was treated as if I wasn't human by a lot of the staff and the medical care was minimal and unkind. I was drilled that when I left I would have a chance to start anew only to be released to more cruelty and punishment. How could I change for the better if I am not given a chance to? How can I live a legit life if there is no opportunity to be legit? Since my release I feel that I'm still being punished for something I was already punished for.

The circumstances that former inmates are released to makes their chance at rehabilitation close to impossible. I'm a white female and is still affected by the collateral damages of incarceration, I can only imagine how much harder it is for the Black and Latino community who already have to face the challenges of discrimination on top of the collateral damage of incarceration. I hope that there will be a change to end the collateral damages so that former inmates are able to have a chance to do better and integrate back into the community as productive citizens.

***"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking." -Albert Einstein***

***"Be willing to give people a second chance. You'll be surprised how well people respond to another opportunity to succeed." -Robert Cheeke***